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"When I say 'we', I mean what I say" The "national" receptions of Waterloo in 19th-century Ireland

Abstract

Waterloo became a key British lieu de mémoire in the 19th century, reinforcing a composite British national identity that was a relatively recent creation. Irish identity is generally seen as incompatible with Britishness, but Irish views on the battle and its commemoration reveal a more complex and shifting picture, which partly mirrored the ambivalent feelings evoked by the figure of the Irish-born Duke of Wellington. This article surveys key official commemorations of Waterloo in Ireland and examines the treatment of the site of the battle in a variety of texts, with a focus on travel accounts by 19th-century Irish writers. From a vocal embrace of Britishness to a mockery of the continental site where that Britishness was celebrated, their reactions often functioned as a marker of the brand of national(ist) politics that they espoused; at the same time, the sheer variety and occasional ambiguity of their responses underscore how fluid thinking about Irish (or indeed British) national identity still was in that eminently "nationalist" century.

Résumé

Waterloo devint un important lieu de mémoire britannique au XIXe siècle, renforçant une identité britannique composite qui demeurait une création relativement récente. On considère souvent que cette identité britannique est incompatible avec l'identité irlandaise. Toutefois, les regards irlandais sur la bataille et ses commémorations dévoilent un tableau contrasté et évolutif, reflétant en partie une ambivalence par rapport au personnage du Duc de Wellington qui était d'origine irlandaise. Cet article passe en revue les principales commémorations officielles de Waterloo en Irlande, et s'attarde ensuite sur la représentation de la bataille dans divers textes, avec une attention particulière pour des récits de voyageurs irlandais au 19ème siècle. Variant d'une franche adoption de l'identité britannique à une raillerie du site continental où cette identité était célébrée, leurs réactions sont souvent indicatrices du type de sentiment national dont ils se revendiquaient. Mais par ailleurs, la diversité considérable des réactions suscitées et leur ambivalence occasionnelle soulignent à quel point la définition d'une identité nationale irlandaise (et par-delà, britannique) demeurait fluide dans ce siècle éminemment "nationaliste".

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"When I say 'We,' I mean what I say"

The "national" receptions of Waterloo in 19th-century Ireland

Waterloo became a key British *lieu de mémoire* in the 19th century, as countless texts and memorials encouraged British subjects to visit the battlefield or at least ponder its significance to their sense of identity.[1] The battle's importance to a triumphant Britishness is illustrated by the cover of Linda Colley's seminal study *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, which reproduces David Wilkie's painting of *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo* (1822). Colley draws attention to Wilkie's carefully balanced portrayal of soldiers from different parts of the British Isles and from the wider Empire, as "the horseman shown bringing the news of the victory is from a Welsh regiment, the soldiers gathering around him include Scotsmen, Englishmen, an Irishman and even a black military bandsman". For Colley, Wilkie's celebration of the victory at Waterloo shows "a mass British patriotism transcending the boundaries of class, ethnicity, occupation, sex and age": that multiethnic patriotism made it possible for the Scottish artist "to paint a London street scene in celebration of a victory won by an Anglo-Irishman, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington".[2] If the victory at Waterloo marked the apogee of Britishness, Colley's focus on Britain – rather than the British Isles – in the rest of her study highlights the fact that Ireland long remained the most refractory member of the polity that, since the Act of Union of 1801, was nominally supposed to make Irishmen full "British" subjects. Colley shows how the English, the Welsh and the Scots could on occasions feel British, but she remains largely silent on the Irish. The aim of this essay is to examine how the memory of Waterloo sometimes drew Ireland into the orbit of a shared Britishness in the early 19th century, and how its rejection became a staple of the discourse of radical Irish nationalism in the second half of the Victorian period.

It would be problematic to speak of a "national" reception of Waterloo in 19th-century Ireland in so far as several nations already coexisted on the as yet unpartitioned island. The Anglo-Irish patriotism embodied by 18th-century luminaries such as Jonathan Swift and Henry Grattan was still a force in Protestant Ireland, despite the political setback represented by the removal of the Irish Parliament

1. Drawing on Pierre Nora's observation that *lieux de mémoire* require constantly renewed discursive and institutional attention to maintain their power, Marysa Demoor has recently explored the importance of both literary and journalistic mediations in the creation of Waterloo as a site of British memory. See Marysa DEMOOR, "Waterloo as a Small 'Realm of Memory': British Writers, Tourism, and the Periodical Press", in: *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 2015, 48, 453-468.

2. Linda COLLEY, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, London, Vintage, 1996, 385-386.

from Dublin to London in 1801.[3] Throughout the 19th century, it gradually lost influence to an emerging Catholic nation emboldened by the passing of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and the charismatic figure of Daniel O'Connell. Movements like Young Ireland in the 1840s and various forms of agitation later in the century sometimes straddled the sectarian divide, but they were marked by an increasingly violent rejection of the British connection that had been imposed on the country[4]: in Irish nationalist discourse, "Briton" became a term of abuse.[5] In the first three decades that followed Waterloo, however, the memory of the battle that had been won by an Anglo-Irish general provided opportunities for Irishmen of various persuasions to share in an inclusive British identity, and Waterloo became a rallying cry that sometimes cut across or blurred the fault lines that divided Irish society. The Irish cult that developed around the figure of Wellington was one factor in that process, and the growing participation of the Irish middle classes in continental tourism was another.

1. The Irish Wellington

Recent studies have shown how the victor of Waterloo was in due course turned into a national icon. His funeral in 1852 became one of the grandest processions ever seen on the streets of London.[6] By the time of his death, the Duke of Wellington was an English icon – yet one whose appropriation by English public opinion also drew the jealousy of those in Ireland who still liked to claim him as a son of Erin.[7] Born into a Protestant Anglo-Irish family in Dublin in 1769, Arthur Wellesley had risen to the top of British society like other prominent Anglo-Irish politicians before and after him (from Castlereagh to Palmerston). Ennobled with an English title in 1814 after his victories in the Peninsular War, and quietly turned into a revered elder statesman after his short and vexed tenure as a Tory Prime Minister in the late 1820s, Wellington was thought to embody English virtues. In his native country, however, the Duke of Wellington was still remembered as Arthur Wellesley, a heroic Irish soldier who, as Prime Minister, had helped pass the long awaited measure granting Catholics the same rights as Protestants. Historians have long debated whether Wellington had been forced into passing Catholic Emancipation or had quietly supported a measure opposed by much of his own party.[8] Such doubts did not hinder Irish gratitude: Wellington's role in steering the measure through Parliament was commemorated by a bas-relief on the monumental obelisk that was erected in Dublin's Phoenix Park to celebrate the Duke's achievements.[9]

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3. See e.g. Jacqueline HILL, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism 1660-1840*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997.

4. See e.g. R. F. FOSTER, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, London, Penguin, 1987, 289-460; Richard ENGLISH, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, London, Macmillan, 2006.

5. The Irish newspaper *The Nation* (1842-1900) which was closely associated with the Young Ireland movement, poured scorn on "Britons" throughout its existence, e.g. when it made fun of the "bawling Britons" who followed Thomas Cook on the continent. See Anon., *The Nation*, 4 May 1872, 7.

6. Peter W. Sinnema, *The Wake of Wellington: Englishness in 1852*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2006.

7. Peter W. Sinnema, "Anxiously Managing Mourning: Wellington's Funeral and the Press", in: *Victorian Review*, 2000, 25, 2, 45-51.

8. Richard W. Davis, "Wellington and the 'Open Question': The Issue of Catholic Emancipation, 1821-1829", in: *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 1997, 29, 1, 39-55.

9. Heather Stedman, "Monuments to the Duke of Wellington in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Forging British and Imperial Identities", in: *Irish Geography*, 2013, 46, 1-2, 141-142. As Stedman

Towering at a height of 62 metres, the tallest obelisk in Europe still cuts a forlorn sight on the outskirts of the Irish capital. First planned in the year before Napoleon's final defeat, when Wellington was already basking in the glory of his Iberian campaigns, it is more than a memorial to the victor of Waterloo, but the Duke's most glorious achievement of course looms large in the monument that was completed in 1861. Legend has it that the friezes that adorn its base were made with bronze cast from French cannons seized on the Belgian battlefield: whatever the case may be, the Wellington testimonial in Dublin remains the grandest monument associated with Waterloo in the British Isles.[10] The controversially massive equestrian statue of Wellington that adorned the triumphal arch in London's Hyde Park Corner was removed in 1881.[11] Whereas aesthetic considerations and local planning priorities sealed the fate of London's tribute to Wellington barely three decades after his death, Dublin's Wellington memorial survived the rise of Irish nationalist agitation, a war of independence, and the symbolic outrages that made the IRA blow up Nelson's Pillar in Dublin city centre in 1966. Half forgotten in the quiet of Phoenix Park, the obelisk that was probably too big to fell stands as a neglected reminder of Irish involvement in British military glory. It was overlooked by most heritage and tourist tours of Dublin until the bicentenary of the battle prompted the Irish Office of Public Works to mount a small-scale "Wellington Exhibition" in Phoenix Park that ran for twelve days in June 2015.[12]

Dublin's Wellington monument took more than four decades to complete: it is tempting to see the protracted and halting process as sign of Ireland's love-hate relation to Wellington, but the reasons should mostly be sought in the vagaries attending the mostly private funding of such "public" monuments in the 19th century.[13] Revered by many, the Duke also had his critics in the land of his birth. Chief among these was his political nemesis Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic lawyer who led the successive campaigns for Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Union, and often forged tactical alliances with Wellington's Whig adversaries in the London Parliament. Scoffing at the "poor old Duke", O'Connell dismissed the relevance of Wellington's opinions on the future of Ireland: "To be sure he was born in Ireland, but being born in a stable does not make a man a horse." The quip was later attributed to Wellington himself, joining a series of other anecdotes that supposedly illustrated the Duke's growing indifference to his Irish origins.[14]

While some Irish newspapers disputed their London colleagues' right to appropriate the deceased Duke as an Englishman in 1852, others were glad to be rid

explains (136-137), Phoenix Park was a public space with military associations (two army barracks were located nearby) and also hosted the residences of key officials, including the Viceroy and the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

10. On the possible origins of the bronze used for the bas relief friezes, see Heather Stedman, "Monuments to the Duke of Wellington", 137-138, 143, and P.F. Garnett, "The Wellington Testimonial", in: *Dublin Historical Record*, 1952, 13, 2, 60-61.

11. Peter W. Sinnema, "Wyatt's 'Wellington' and the Hyde Park Corner Controversy", in: *Oxford Art Journal*, 2004, 27, 2, 175-192.

12. See Anon., "Minister Harris welcomes 'Wellington Exhibition' to commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo", 18 June 2015 [online], http://merrionstreet.ie/en/NewsRoom/Releases/Minister_Harris_welcomes_Wellington_Exhibition_to_commemorate_the_bicentenary_of_the_Battle_of_Waterloo.html.

13. See Heather Stedman, "Monuments to the Duke of Wellington", 138.

14. Rory Muir, *Wellington: Waterloo and the Fortunes of Peace 1814–1852*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015, 532.

of an Anglo-Irish renegade.[15] While recent studies like Sinnema's and Muir's have charted the disputes that surrounded the respective memorializations of Wellington in Ireland and Britain, this essay aims to recentre the focus of the discussion on Irish memories of Waterloo itself – a battle that is often inseparable from Wellington in Irish imaginations, but which is nevertheless more specific than the broader figure of the statesman whose political role exceeded his victory on the Belgian battlefield.

2. Waterloo commemorations in Ireland

Wellington's later years were spent well away from Ireland. The extent to which that physical estrangement corresponded to a psychological alienation is debatable, but if Wellington sometimes forgot about Ireland, Ireland did not forget about him – or about Waterloo. The Dublin memorial to the great Irish general and statesman ran into a forty-year delay, but for decades the memory of his greatest military achievement was kept alive by an annual military review held in Dublin every eighteenth of June, the day of the battle. Conceived as a popular display, the review made the Irish commander central to the commemoration of the battle. The dominant role accorded to Wellington is illustrated by an article which appeared in the nationalist newspaper *The Nation* in 1853 when, one year after Wellington's death, the annual parade was discontinued. *The Nation*'s coverage of that development is worth quoting at some length, as it gives an idea both of the importance that the military review held in Dublin life in the early 19th century, and of the hostility it engendered among the emerging ranks of radical Irish nationalists for which the Young Ireland organ spoke.

> We are now enabled positively to state that there will be no review here (Dublin), nor any similar display whatever, on the 18th instant. The reasons which have led to this decision are obvious, and the decision itself is to be highly approved. While the Duke of Wellington lived it was due to the honour in which the nation held their great General, not to discontinue an observance in which his crowning achievement was commemorated; but that reason exists no longer; and the friendly relations and intercourse which every day are uniting us more closely to France may well be allowed to obliterate the commemoration of an event, the like of which, it is earnestly to be hoped, may never again occur.[16]

The Nation concedes that renewed ties with France involve "us" as part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that the (Irish) nation once embraced Wellington: "For thirty-seven years English Chivalry and Irish Loyalty kept holiday on this Eighteenth of June in honour of the great victory of Waterloo". The journalist grants that the spectacle had genuine popular appeal: it "fired the ambition and exercised the shouting capacity of the young bucks from the clubs and the hungry *gamins* of the Liberties [Dublin's poorer districts]",[17] who were the most likely to emulate the numerous Irish soldiers who had fought under Wellington at Waterloo. Restrictions on Catholics serving in the British army had proved untenable as 18th-century Britain increasingly relied on Ireland's populace for man-

15. Peter W. Sinnema, "Anxiously Managing Mourning", 49-50.
16. Anon. "The Eighteenth of June", in: *The Nation*, 18 June 1853, 9.
17. *Ibidem.*

power. Before the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act, the British Army thus offered one rare opportunity for the majority of Ireland's (male) population to feel part of a common British polity, however mercenary some of their motives may have been.[18]

The spectacle of Irish rejoicing in British glory jarred on the *Nation*'s sensibilities, as the newspaper's editors no longer recognised Ireland as part of a British polity:

> the Eighteenth of June was the *fete* of Ireland more than the Seventeenth of March. MARS and WELLINGTON supplanted Saint PATRICK and the Shamrock; and the flag that braved the battle streamed triumphant in the breeze of popular favour and loyalty. We once gazed upon the mimic battle. But we are sorry to say we brought away no other trophies than a picked pocket, a dislocated shoulder, and aggravated disloyalty; and we marched home with the decided feeling that the whole spectacle was slavish, disgusting, and unIrish.[19]

Quoting from *Hamlet* (5.1.220-221), the article closes with an ironic epitaph on Wellington and his cult, though it simultaneously keeps drawing attention to the Duke's Irish background by pointedly using his patronym:

> Well. The Great Captain is dead; and the Eighteenth of June is blotted from the calendar of loyalty and glory […] English and French fleets ride in amity in the Dardanelles. The lion of Saint James's lies down with the lamb of the Tuileries. And Waterloo anniversaries shall no longer excite the pride of England, or stir the vengeance of France. The Russian is your great pacifier. That mighty despot, whose shadow darkens one-seventh of the globe, arises to grasp new provinces and new capitals. […] And there is an end to the wrongs of BONAPARTE and the glory of WELLESLEY. A lesson as old as the world; for
>
> "Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
> May stop a hole to keep the wind away".[20]

The obituary proved somewhat premature, as 1861 saw the completion of the giant obelisk that did more than provide shelter from the wind in Phoenix Park. But Waterloo and its victor were now openly contested memories in Irish public discourse.

3. Waterloo and Irish novelists

Some of the most visible literary expressions of the Irish cult of Waterloo predictably came from Anglo-Irish Protestant writers who could readily identify with Wellington, even if they were more willing than the Duke to carry their Irishness on their sleeves. Waterloo loomed large in the subgenre of the military

18. See Sean Connolly, "Varieties of Britishness: Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the Hanoverian State", in: Alexander Grant & Keith Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*, London, Routledge, 1995, 193-207.

19. Anon., "The Eighteenth of June", 9.

20. *Ibidem.*

novel that thrived in the 1830s and 1840s; the two best known practitioners of the genre hailed from Protestant Ireland. The numerous tales of military life that W.H. Maxwell (1792-1850) and Charles Lever (1806-1872) churned out in those decades almost invariably featured episodes from the Napoleonic wars in their sprawling picaresque plots. They sometimes used Waterloo as a selling ploy even when the volume contained few narratives that were connected with the battle itself: Maxwell's *Stories of Waterloo, and Other Tales* (1829) is a case in point.[21] Maxwell and especially Lever often included Irish protagonists among their characters, thus drawing attention to the part played by Ireland in the defeat of Napoleon. However, their aim in doing so was perhaps more to call British attention to Irish loyalty than to preserve the memory of Waterloo in Irish life, as their works were published in London and were largely (though not exclusively) geared to a British readership. Similarly, Maxwell may have traced the Irish background of Wellington's family (which was still of English extraction) in the first chapters of his popular three-volume *Life of his Grace the Duke of Wellington* (1839), a work that was to remain the standard biography of the Duke before it was eclipsed by his Scottish namesake Herbert Maxwell's 1899 *Life of Wellington*. But when the glowing reviews from British newspapers that were reprinted at the back of his volumes praised the biography as "our national life of Wellington" or "a truly national work", the nation they evoked was implicitly a British or English one.[22]

Apart from his own military fiction, Charles Lever also owed his success to comic novels like *The Dodd Family Abroad*, which recounts the adventures of an Anglo-Irish family who relocate to the continent and write letters to their friends back home in Ireland. Drawing on Lever's own prolonged residence on the European mainland and on his scathing observations about the rise of "mass" middle-class tourism,[23] *The Dodd Family Abroad* casts a jaded eye on the transformation of Waterloo into a tourist trap. As Kenny Dodd writes: "Waterloo's a humbug, Tom. I don't mean to say that Bony found it so some thirty odd years back, but such it now appears". The memory of the battle itself, however, prompts an interestingly ambivalent outburst of patriotism in the Irish correspondent: "One thing is clear, Tom, however— we beat the French; and when I say "We," I mean what I say. England knows, and all Europe knows, who won the battle, and more's the disgrace for the way we're treated".[24] If Kenny Dodd obviously refers to the importance of Ireland's contribution in the victory over Bonaparte, what he means by "we" remains tantilizingly unclear. He may echo complaints that the British state was slow to reward Irish loyalty: Irish Catholics who fought at Waterloo had had to wait for another fourteen years for Catholic Emancipation, a period that saw ballads like the following emerge:

> Oh Wellington, sure you know it is true
> In blood we were drenched at famous Waterloo.

21. On Maxwell and Lever as leading practitioners of the military novel, see James H. Murphy, *Irish Novelists and the Victorian Age*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 38-43, 73-79.

22. W.H. Maxwell, *Life of his Grace the Duke of Wellington*, vol. 2, London, Baily and Co, 1840, unnumbered back pages.

23. See James Buzard, *The Beaten Track. European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993, 60-62.

24. Charles Lever, *The Dodd Family Abroad*, vol. 1, London, Chapman and Hall, 1854, 26.

We fought for our king to uphold his crown,
Our only reward was—"Papists lie down!"[25]

The passing of the measure in 1829 had not quelled other sources of discontent with the Union; Lever's novel also followed the Great Irish Famine of the late 1840s, a crisis during which the British authorities' reaction had often been criticized. On the other hand, the Protestant Kenny Dodd is an odd spokesman for Irish Catholics whom he describes as inherently disloyal in other letters, and Lever, for all the ambivalence of his attitude to the Act of Union,[26] was certainly no friend of vocal Irish nationalists.[27] Kenny Dodd's words about the victor of Waterloo may also refer more specifically to Wellington rather than to Irish troops, and the "we" who are badly treated by England may stand for the Anglo-Irish Protestants whose privileges were being eroded by successive, if grudging British concessions to Irish Catholic and/or nationalist demands. To complicate matters even further, Kenny Dodd is the kind of comic character who can't always be trusted to voice authorial opinion, even though his sarcastic tone is often similar to the one Lever used in his journalism.

4. Waterloo in Irish travel writing

Lever's ambivalence illustrates how Irish responses to Waterloo became increasingly contested with the rise of modern Irish nationalism. This is borne out by a comparison of various accounts of the battlefield in the travelogues written by Irish visitors to Belgium in the 19th century. In the decades after 1815, Waterloo was dutifully visited by streams of tourists who crossed the channel to discover a continent from which they had been cut off by years of Napoleonic blockades. The phenomenon was boosted by the introduction of new and faster means of transport and by the expansion of tourism into a practice that increasing numbers of middle-class people could afford. For those new tourists, Belgium was often the first port of call, and the site of Waterloo was both within easy reach and imbued with the aura of recent glory. It was, in Marjorie Morgan's words, a "truly *British* national shrine"[28] where tourists from the whole of Britain could celebrate a common identity. Morgan's study of British travellers to Europe, however, mirrors Colley's work on Britishness in that it limits itself to English, Welsh and Scottish visitors. The participation of Irish tourists in that phenomenon has so far attracted little attention, partly because Irish identities were deemed incompatible with Britishness, and partly because 19th-century Ireland was long seen as a country that attracted tourists rather than sent out its own to foreign shores. But even though the political and sociological make-up of Ireland rendered the emergence of a

25. Quoted by Patrick Geoghegan, "'A Battle of Giants': Waterloo, Wellington and Ireland", in: *History Ireland*, 2015, 23, 3, 22.

26. Lever was critical of the Act of Union itself, but also defended the Union as the only way to ward off the nationalist excesses that British domination generated. See Jim Shanahan, "Reviving Pleasant Memories': Charles Lever and the Crisis of Union", in: Fionnuala Dillane & Ronan Kelly (eds.), *New Voices in Irish Criticism 4*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2003, 202-211.

27. On Lever's novels and his sympathies, see James H. Murphy, *Irish Novelists and the Victorian Age*, 71-92.

28. Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, 190. Morgan's emphasis.

middle-class culture more problematic than in Britain, such a culture did exist, and it also included Irish tourists who produced and consumed travel literature about the continent.[29] As long neglected Irish travelogues now come under scrutiny, they can shed light on the ways in which their authors defined their national identities in relation to the site of Wellington's victory.

Waterloo was an almost obligatory destination for many British tourists, even as many commentators were, like Lever's Kenny Dodd, struck by the battlefield's emptiness or appalled by the locals' tawdry commercialization of supposed relics from the battle.[30] But the British tourists Morgan studies were not alone in worshipping at the shrine, they were joined by tourists from the sister isle who pursued their various agendas by laying their own claim to the memory of Waterloo or by actively subverting it. Among those Irish visitors, it is not surprising to see a Protestant Unionist like the Tory M.P. James Emerson Tennent (1804-1869) emphasize the crucial contribution that loyal Irish regiments made to the victory over Napoleon:

> By the way, whilst all justice has been done to the bravery of the English at Waterloo, and all the credit to which they were entitled, at least, claimed for the Scotch regiments – it is a fact that speaks whole bulletins and gazettes for the gallantry of the Irish, that the regiment which had the greatest number killed of any of the field was the 27th foot, the Enniskillens.[31]

Irish travellers who penned their impressions often published in London and cultivated an audience that was at least dual, or even primarily British, yet some did not hesitate to remind their readers of an Irish perspective. The perspective may have been loyal to the Union, as it certainly was in Tennent's case, but such travelogues sometimes used Waterloo to make a point about the rightful place that Ireland should be given within that Union.

Irish Protestant writers were not the only ones to make that point. The granting of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 meant that well-to-do Irish Catholics could now aspire to being treated as the equals of their Protestant counterparts in Ireland and Britain. One way in which they asserted their enhanced social status was the newly fashionable middle-class pursuit of continental travel. When the journey included a visit to Waterloo, tourism gave an opportunity to some to claim an Irish stake in the multinational identity that was celebrated at that "truly *British* national shrine",[32] and to emphasize their hope that Irish loyalty could be rewarded with full integration in a new British polity.

Such were obviously the feelings of James Roderick O'Flanagan (1814-1900), a freshly graduated Catholic lawyer who set out on a continental tour in 1836 before being called to the Irish bar. The two volumes of *Impressions at Home and Abroad;*

29. See Raphaël Ingelbien, *Irish Cultures of Travel. Writing on the Continent, 1829-1914*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

30. See Stuart Semmel, "Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting, and Memory after Waterloo", in: *Representations*, 2000, 69, 9-37, and Pieter François, "'The Best Way to See Waterloo is with Your Eyes Shut': British 'Histourism', Authenticity and Commercialisation in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century", in: *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, 2013, 22, 1, 26-41.

31. James Emerson Tennent, *Belgium*, vol. 2, London, Bentley, 1841, 148.

32. Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, 190.

or, a Year of Real Life that he published in London and Dublin in 1837 open with a section that includes the following lines of verse:

> To where the castled Rhine doth flow,
> Where Tell, and the Swiss patriot stood,
> To where Napoleon ruled I go -
> Where warring nations spilt their blood;
> Where Irish hearts proved firm, and true, -
> On thy red plains, bleak Waterloo![33]

If the reference to the Swiss example of William Tell betokens a patriotic fibre, O'Flanagan immediately makes it clear that his proud Irishness is perfectly compatible with a British identity. When, after various journeys in Ireland and England, his travelogue records his departure for the continent, O'Flanagan exclaims: "with my passport tout en ordre, start for France in the morning. Then, ye British Isles, farewell!".[34] The reference to a common British identity may have been prompted by the passport, which confirms Marjorie Morgan's analysis that Britishness was an official, rather than emotional identity.[35] It is still remarkable that a Catholic Irishman would now subscribe to it, redefining Britain as "the British Isles" in the process.

In the rest of O'Flanagan's continental travelogue, the word "British" is mostly used with reference to the heroes of the battle of Waterloo, a "chief object of interest to the British subject": "cold, indeed, must be the heart that will not glow with enthusiasm, when he recollects that by British prowess was the force of Napoleon checked, and, by the interposition of England, the kingdoms of Europe kept in their just balance".[36] Even as he speaks of "British troops" and "British heroes", O'Flanagan also stresses the multinational nature of Wellington's British army: "Britain rallied her English sons; the light-hearted child of Erin 'rushed to the field, as though he were summoned to a banquet'; and the hardy Caledonian whetted his claymore, and denounced woe to the chief of France".[37] When he enters a local church to "commune alone with [his] deceased fellow country-men", O'Flanagan adopts an eschatological perspective in which sectarian and (sub) national perspectives dissolve in a contemplation of the British dead, including one "Alexander Hay, Cornet, 16th Light Dragoons, aged eighteen years": the fallen hero of the 16th The Queen's Lancers was not Irish, but a shared sense of youth and a common Britishness were enough to bring O'Flanagan to the verge of tears.[38]

In the years following Catholic Emancipation, the memory of Waterloo could obviously serve to cement a composite British identity in which loyal Irishmen of various backgrounds could invest. It also served as a rallying cry that helped

33. James Roderick O'Flanagan, *Impressions at Home and Abroad, or, a Year of Real Life*, vol. 1, London, Smith, Elder and Co and Dublin, John Cumming, 1837, 9.
34. *Ibid.*, 206.
35. Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, 195-216.
36. James Roderick O'Flanagan, *Impressions at Home and Abroad*, vol. 2, 313, 315.
37. *Ibid.*, 316, 319, 315.
38. *Ibid.*, 320-321.

transcend political divisions. A Whig and professed admirer of Daniel O'Connell,[39] O'Flanagan did not let party feeling get the better of him. Although he remarkably does not draw attention to the Duke's Irish background, O'Flanagan gives him his due: "I do not mean to be the Duke of Wellington's panegyrist, nor would I unfold in these pages, why I differ from him in politics; but there is something due to every man, who has appeared in public life, which party feuds have nothing whatsoever to do with. It is simply – justice". He then goes on to exonerate Wellington of accusations that the British commander-in-chief neglected his duties on the eve of the battle by attending the Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels.[40]

O'Flanagan was not the only Irish Catholic traveller who penned his sketch of Waterloo in those years. 1837 also saw the publication in London of *Picturesque and Historical Recollections during a Tour through Belgium, Germany, France and Switzerland in the Summer of 1835* by Matthew O'Conor (1773–1844), another Catholic lawyer. While O'Flanagan wrote with the callow enthusiasm of hopeful, emancipated youth, O'Conor was a seasoned writer in his sixties. He was also a prominent member of the O'Conor clan who traced their lineage to times predating the English conquest of Ireland.[41] His travelogue seems to address both British and Irish middle-class tourists by describing "the pleasures of a continental tour, the facility and cheapness of travelling, and the amusements of some of the watering places in the South of Germany", but his aristocratic Irish sensibility is reflected in e.g. the signature he leaves in a hotel guest book: "HIBERNUS, GENTIS SUÆ CAPUT, being the oldest of the race, and according to Brehon custom, the head of the sept".[42]

Partly educated in Rome before the Napoleonic invasions, O'Conor was a less impressionable traveller than his young coreligionist O'Flanagan. His record of Waterloo is less lyrical, it is also informed by O'Conor's longstanding amateur interest in military history – one that would eventually result in his posthumous *Military History of the Irish Nation*. O'Conor's travelogue chiefly dwells on Waterloo in order to give his own reconstruction of the battle rather than impressions of the sights that the battlefield offers to the tourist; his aim is to provide a "short sketch of this engagement as traced by us, aided by the science and knowledge of some French officers" in order to "elucidate some conflicting accounts of that memorable event".[43]

While he sometimes sounds an Irish patriotic note in other parts of his travelogue (particularly those on the freedom-loving, tolerant Swiss), O'Conor does not draw attention to Irish soldiers' contribution to the final defeat of Napoleon. References to Wellington's troops alternately use the adjectives "British" and "English", sometimes in the same paragraphs, e.g. "many of the [French] marshals had deserted, and the elements seemed to favour the English. The British order of battle extended in a semicircle along the Nivelle road, and crossed the road from Charleroy to the small farm-house of Papillotte". Wellington himself is called a

39. Patrick Maume, "O'Flanagan, James Roderick", in: *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, s.d., [online], <http://dib.cambridge.org/>.

40. James Roderick O'Flanagan, *Impressions at Home and Abroad*, vol. 2, 316, 317.

41. David Murphy, "O'Conor, Matthew", in: *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, s.d., [online], http://dib.cambridge.org/.

42. Matthew O'Conor, *Picturesque and Historical Recollections during a Tour through Belgium, Germany, France and Switzerland during the Summer Vacation of 1835*, London, W. S. Orr &Co, 1837, ii, 132.

43. *Ibid*., 24.

"British general".[44] O'Conor (who shared O'Flanagan's Whig sympathies, though not his admiration for O'Connell) did not emphasize Wellington's Irish credentials in this context, but he still felt proprietorial – and perhaps British – enough to voice his dismay at the "mound, two hundred feet high, surmounted by the Belgic lion" which "would fain snatch the honour from the genius that planned, and the valour that achieved, the immortal victory".[45]

O'Conor would later bring out Wellington's Irishness in his last, posthumous book entitled *Military History of the Irish Nation*. His 1835 European tour had actually enabled him to visit various continental libraries with a view to collecting material for his *magnum opus*, which mostly details the achievements of Irish soldiers enlisted in the service of various continental monarchies. Published in Dublin in 1845, O'Conor's *Military History* is more obviously patriotic than the *Picturesque and Historical Recollections* which he had addressed to a dual audience of British and Irish readers. Its emphasis on the heroism of Irish Catholic exiles who fought in European armies (and not infrequently against British troops) meant that the work potentially added grist to the mill of radical nationalists who now contemplated using violence against British rule in Ireland; the book received a glowing review from the Young Ireland leader Thomas Davis in the pages of *The Nation*.[46] O'Conor himself was probably aware that his record of Irish military prowess could be put to such uses, and tried to pre-empt accusations of disloyalty in his concluding paragraphs. After hundreds of pages devoted to Irish bravery in 17th- and 18th-century European battles, O'Conor turns to more recent times: "Nor need England complain of the services of Ireland to her enemies; throughout the last war, from Assaye to Vittoria, and from Vimiera to Waterloo, the Irish battalions maintained their fame and her flag; and high in services and renown, above all the generals who ever drew sword in her name, was the Irishman, Arthur Wellesley".[47] The invocation of Wellington through his patronym is a proprietorially Irish gesture, but it is used to highlight Irish loyalty to the Union.

O'Conor was ultimately a loyal (though by no means uncritical) supporter of the Union, but his work inaugurated an interest in Irish traces on the continent that became a staple of nationalist writing in the following decades. The best illustration of the trend is arguably *Souvenirs of Irish Footprints over Europe* by Eugene Davis (1857-1897), first serialized in the *Dublin Evening Telegraph* in 1888 and published in book form in the following year. Written by a radical journalist and poet who had studied in Louvain and had become involved in Irish republican circles in Paris, *Souvenirs* is partly a guidebook that invites prospective Irish tourists to follow the author on his pilgrimages to various places of Irish interest in Europe – Irish colleges, monasteries, and mostly battlefields. As he updates O'Conor's accounts of Irish bravery abroad, Davis makes a very different use of Wellington's victory at Waterloo.

In Davis's *Souvenirs*, the battlefield was made the butt of Irish nationalist irony: the "favourite resort of British tourists" is mocked for a "glorious and, it ap-

44. *Ibid.*, 29, 27, 28.
45. *Ibid.*, 24.
46. Anon. [Thomas Davis], "The Irish Brigade", in: *The Nation*, 7 June 1845, 12.
47. Matthew O'Conor, *Military History of the Irish Nation*, Dublin, Hodges and Smith, 1845, 369.

peared to me, an ever-growing superabundance" of relics sold to gullible Britons – the very kind who "would laugh to scorn the authenticity of a relic of Brian Boru that may be shown him in the neighbourhood of Kinkora".[48] British tourists abroad had a reputation for exercizing an irreverent common sense when confronted with local forms of piety and worship, including those surrounding ancient Irish kings in the sister isle or Catholic saints on the continent.[49] Davis uses Waterloo to show that Britons' common sense was clearly not waterproof. Describing Wellington's headquarters as a "kind of English Mecca for English tourists in Belgium",[50] Davis's travelogue effectively turns the tables on British tourists who were prone to make fun of Irish national pieties and Catholic devotion.

Taking his cue from Irish nationalists who gladly removed Wellington from the pedestal on which loyalists had put him, Davis lost no opportunity to rehearse anecdotes (whether apocryphal or not) that showed the Duke in a negative light. He thus mockingly records how, during his stay in Brussels, he visited the house where the Duchess of Richmond gave her infamous ball on the eve of the battle: "the spot in the Rue Royale where an Irishman (who apologised for being one on the plea that a man born in a stable was not necessarily a horse), the Duke of Wellington, tripped it on the light fantastic toes a few evenings before the battle of Waterloo".[51] Unimpressed with the places hallowed by the memory of Wellington's victory, Davis instead "proceed[s] to Landen" to commemorate the Jacobite exile Patrick Sarsfield.[52] Uncluttered by any sign of tourist trade and featuring a simple cross on the spot where the Irish hero was mortally wounded while fighting for the Catholic King of France, Landen was a more suitable *lieu de mémoire* for the radical Irish nationalism that decisively turned its back on the Union.

Conclusion

Irish interest in Waterloo was not extinct by the end of the 19th century, but it was limited to an increasingly beleaguered Unionist perspective. Advertisements for continental trips in the upmarket and Unionist *Irish Times* still kept the flame alive as they promoted "Belgian tours, including Brussels (for Waterloo), the Ardennes, and the picturesque Flemish cities".[53] Nationalist readers and travellers, on the other hand, were now more likely to ignore the battlefield that consecrated Wellington's glory and leave the beaten track in search of places associated with Irish Catholic resistance to British rule. Responses to Waterloo had settled into the mould of the ideological divisions that still dominate debates on Irish identity. Before the radicalization of Irish nationalism in the mid- to late 19th century, however, some Irish Catholics had used Waterloo and Wellington to claim a rightful place for Ireland in a new British dispensation which they hoped would acknowledge their specificity as well as their loyalty. Like the Irish Catholics' tribute to Wellington on the Phoenix Park obelisk, their ideological investment in the British shrine of Waterloo

48. Eugene Davis, *Souvenirs of Irish Footprints over Europe*, Dublin, The Freeman's Journal, s.d. [1889], 24.

49. See e.g. Linda Colley, *Britons*, 37, Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, 97-100.

50. Eugene Davis, *Souvenirs of Irish Footprints over Europe*, 25.

51. *Ibid.*, 23.

52. *Ibid.*, 26.

53. Anon., "Bank Holiday on the Continent", in: *The Irish Times*, 26 July 1895, 6.

is now a forgotten footnote in a history that modern Ireland has left behind. For those mindful of such records, however, Irish memories of Waterloo underscore how fluid thinking about Irish (and indeed British) national identity still was in the middle of an eminently "nationalist" century.

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